



TITLE:

<Articles>From 'Culture' to 'Cultures' : Some Notes on a Consequential Conceptual Shift from the Viewpoint of Intercultural Education in the Humboldtian Tradition

AUTHOR(S):

Mattig, Ruprecht

CITATION:

Mattig, Ruprecht. <Articles>From 'Culture' to 'Cultures' : Some Notes on a Consequential Conceptual Shift from the Viewpoint of Intercultural Education in the Humboldtian Tradition. 臨床教育人間学 2013, 12: 32-43

ISSUE DATE:

2013-08-06

URL:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2433/197122>

RIGHT:

From 'Culture' to 'Cultures': Some Notes on a Consequential Conceptual Shift from the Viewpoint of Intercultural Education in the Humboldtian Tradition

RUPRECHT MATTIG

Technical University, Germany

This paper elaborates on the relationship between education and culture in regard to the historical shift from a singular to a plural culture concept. Using the German notion of Bildung as a key concept for thinking about intercultural education, the paper starts by summarizing Wilhelm von Humboldt's influential conceptualization of Bildung and culture. The relationship between Bildung and culture is then re-considered in light of the development of the plural culture concept in Anglo-Saxon anthropology. The paper suggests that Bildung and the plural culture concept can be linked by reference to the anthropological concept of cultural translation. Cultural translation is interpreted as a form of understanding that involves not only cognitive operations but also social practices. This analysis in turn enlarges the traditional concept of Bildung. Finally, the discussion of Bildung and culture will be related to existing problems of cultural understanding in the international academic sphere.

INTRODUCTION

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), German educational philosopher and Minister of Education during the reform of the Prussian educational system, developed ideas on education and culture that influenced scholars all around the world (e.g. Bunzl, 1996; Trabant, 1990). In his writings, Humboldt elaborates upon many different topics, such as the classical Greeks, the differences between men and women, and the philosophy of language. However, despite this range of subjects, Humboldt's thoughts always center on one idea: the possibilities of human development, refinement, and cultivation (Benner, 2003, pp. 31-34). In German, there is a specific word for this idea: *Bildung*.

This paper considers Humboldt's influential notion of *Bildung* in relation to the concept of culture. In Humboldt's writings, *Bildung* and culture are closely related to each other. However, in the course of history the meaning of the culture concept has changed significantly. This historical development throws up questions concerning the relationship between culture and *Bildung*. This paper suggests that enlarging the concept of *Bildung* according to the change of meaning of the culture concept enables new ways of dealing with cultural diversity from an educational point of view.

The attempt to enlarge the concept of *Bildung* is situated within the context of contemporary German educational discourse. In Germany, *Bildung* is still the leading concept in the realm of education. For about twenty years now, a group of scholars connected to the educational anthropologist Christoph Wulf at the Free University of Berlin have been trying to rethink the concept of *Bildung*. They argue that it is not enough to consider *Bildung* mainly in terms of the cognitive capacities of human beings; rather, they say, capacities like the imaginative or the bodily powers of human beings need to be reflected too (e.g. Schäfer and Wulf, 1999; Wulf, 2003; Wulf, 2006; Wulf *et. al.*, 2004; Wulf *et. al.*, 2011). This paper suggests a new way of looking at *Bildung* in relation to intercultural education. Therefore, the paper transcends the boundaries of German

educational discourse and addresses educational issues in the international sphere.

First, the relationship between *Bildung* and culture as it appears in Humboldt's writings will be sketched. Second, some historical changes in the meaning of the culture concept will be considered and reflected upon in relation to the idea of *Bildung*. This discussion refers to the concept of culture as it developed in Anglo-Saxon anthropology. It will be outlined that difficulties arose regarding the relationship between *Bildung* and the modified culture concept. In the third part it will be suggested that these difficulties can be tackled using the concept of cultural translation. In the fourth part, the concept of *Bildung* will be related to the concept of cultural translation, and in doing so the traditional concept of *Bildung* will be enlarged. Finally, the preceding considerations will be applied to intercultural education, particularly to the international academic sphere.

BILDUNG, CULTURE, CHARACTER, AND LANGUAGE: HUMBOLDT'S EDUCATIONAL THEORY

Humboldt did not develop a fixed system of thought, and he would never have attempted to (Menze, 1976, p. 145). Being interested in the possibilities of human development, he developed his own thoughts further with every subject that he studied. Nevertheless, there are some concepts that play a major role in his reflections, and these concepts shall be considered in this section: *Bildung*, character, culture, and language.

Bildung is a German word that is notoriously difficult to translate into other languages. Depending on the context, it can be translated as 'education', 'formation', or 'cultivation'. *Bildung* contains the word *Bild*, which translates as 'image'. In this sense, *Bildung* refers to the formation and refinement of human beings according to a particular image of human excellence. For Humboldt, *Bildung* is 'the highest and most harmonious development of [man's] powers to a complete and consistent whole' (Humboldt, 1854, p. 11). In Humboldt's writings, terms like 'man' or 'individual' do not exclusively refer to individual subjects, but also to collective individualities like the different sexes or nations. *Bildung* can thus mean the 'highest and most harmonious development' of, for instance, a single person or an entire nation (Humboldt, 1960).

In Humboldt's works, the word culture (*Cultur*) is very close to *Bildung*. It refers to the process of cultivation and refinement of nations and peoples. Culture means the 'higher' achievements of the human mind, like language, music, arts, etc. and strives for the perfection of these achievements. It is a normative concept that serves to evaluate different nations in regard to their achievements. In Europe, then, Humboldt sees nations such as Germany, France, and the United Kingdom as having achieved the highest level of cultivation, while Poland, Spain, and Portugal are at a middle level, and Russia and Turkey are at the lowest level of cultivation (Humboldt, 1960, p. 356). Therefore, this concept of culture refers to a process that is seen as universal and linear: every nation climbs up the ladder of refinement—and there is only one such ladder—and can thus be categorized according to different levels of culture.

Although culture and *Bildung* are seen as universal, Humboldt emphasizes that every individual subject and every nation can only develop according to its inherent individual possibilities and limitations. It could be said that all individuals have particular configurations of powers that need to be cultivated in their individual forms. In Humboldt's terms, every nation has a specific 'character' that needs to be developed. For example, Japanese can never become like Germans and Germans not like Japanese. Japanese and Germans should not try to become alike, but they should try to cultivate

their particular characters as best as possible.

At first sight, there seems to be a contradiction in these thoughts: while the idea of culture suggests a universal development of human beings, the concept of national character suggests a development of nations according to their particular characteristics. This seeming contradiction can be solved by bearing in mind that in Humboldt's writings 'culture' and *Bildung* refer to the intellectual powers of human beings (*geistige Kräfte*), while 'character' usually refers to bodily powers (*sinnliche Kräfte*). Humboldt's notion of national character comprises the language, the customs, and the way of life of a people (*Sprache, Sitten und Lebensart eines Volkes*) (Humboldt, 1961, p. 430). Humboldt asserts that human intellect is universal (for example, physical laws are valid all over the world, and they can be understood by everyone), whereas the human body is formed by particular circumstances and social habits.

The last key concept of Humboldt's educational theory to be considered here is language. Language was Humboldt's main interest in his later works. He came up with the idea that different languages are built upon and express distinct worldviews (*Weltansichten*). Paul Standish puts this idea as follows: 'Different languages divide up the world in different ways, engendering diverse patterns of conceptual connection and different possibilities of thought' (Standish, 2012, p. 21). To give an example from Japanese, the words *amae* (= expressions of dependency needs) and *amaeru* (= acting in a way intended to solicit help or attention from another), and other such words, express a specific sense of social dependency. As Doi Takeo shows, this sense of dependency is rather characteristic for the Japanese language and contrasts with the Western sense of autonomy (Doi, 2001). Therefore, the task of translating one language into another is not simply done by matching words and sentences; it rather embraces the transposition of one worldview into another. For Humboldt, then, language and national character are closely linked, because a language expresses the characteristic worldview of a particular nation.

Having sketched the four concepts, *Bildung*, culture, national character, and language, in Humboldt's educational thoughts, the mutual relationships of these concepts shall now be considered. Humboldt held that learning other languages is an important part of the process of *Bildung*. The study of a different language opens up a window into another national character and its worldview. Furthermore, learning another language promises to change the way the learner looks at the world: the learner's own worldview will be enriched and possibly transformed by getting to know other ways of looking at the world. If a person becomes familiar with other languages, her characteristic way of thinking will be enlarged and will gain new forms (Humboldt, 1905). In Standish's terms, given above, the learner will discover new possibilities of conceptual connection and of thought. In this sense, *Bildung* means that the person who learns another language is able to see the world through the eyes of the foreign language, and thus gains a new outlook on life and develops their mental powers.

At the same time, getting to know another worldview may trigger the individual's critical reflections about the possibilities and limitations of his or her own worldview. In his analysis of the character of the classical Greeks, for instance, Humboldt sets out the Greeks' sense of freedom and beauty as an ideal that he contrasts with the 'dull and petty' (*dumpf und engherzig*) situation of the nations of his times (Humboldt, 1908, p. 609). Similarly, when Humboldt traveled to the Basque Country, Northern Spain, in order to study the Basque national character, he made a significant discovery: he found out that in daily life there is not such a separation between 'high' and 'low' people in the Basque Country as in Germany (Humboldt, 1961). Humboldt, who was very interested in

overcoming the social system of the *ancien regime*, was impressed. This observation in the Basque Country stimulated his elaborations on an education for all in his home country (Flitner, 1985).

In this sense, Humboldt's considerations on *Bildung* are essentially linked to the idea of intercultural education (cp. Eirmbter-Stolbrink, 2005). *Bildung*, thus conceived, means an opening up and enlargement of the mind through encountering foreign ways of life, and it has a significant ethical dimension:

It is a most important object in life not to be wrapt up in self, but to enter as much as possible into the various modes of feeling of those around us. In this way only can we judge and estimate men according to their views and not according to our own. It is by this that we preserve respect even for the apparent contradictions in the conduct of others, and never seek to offer violence to their mental freedom. There is really no employment more congenial both to mind and heart, than the thorough study of character in its various shades (Humboldt, 1849, p. 116).

Summing up the preceding considerations, *Bildung* can be seen as an enlargement of a subject's worldview that is triggered by an encounter with foreign worlds, namely with foreign languages. The process of *Bildung* is comprised of two interrelated transformational movements: (1) a transformation of a subject's relation to the world, and (2) a transformation of a subject's relation to the self. This idea of *Bildung* is still alive in today's educational discourse, particularly in biographical research (Marotzki, 1990).

THE CONCEPTUAL SHIFT FROM 'CULTURE' AND 'NATIONAL CHARACTERS' TO 'CULTURES'

Although Humboldt's thoughts on *Bildung* are still alive today, the relation between *Bildung* and culture has become problematic. As will be shown in what follows, one reason for this can be found in a significant shift in the meaning of the culture concept. While the idea of culture as refinement, as discussed in the preceding section, is still existent today, other definitions have made their way into academic and popular discourse, namely the concept of culture that has developed in Anglo-Saxon anthropology.⁴ Franz Boas (1858-1942), the so-called 'Father of American anthropology', defines culture as follows:

Culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activities as determined by these habits (Boas, cited in Brameld, 1957, p. 9).

In regard to the discussion above this definition is remarkable in at least two aspects. First, this definition no longer includes the idea of refinement. It does not set out any standards of achievement according to which a group of people could be evaluated. This change in the definition of culture is quite consequential. Instead of seeing culture as a universal process that leads to some defined goal of cultivation, it suggests neutrally acknowledging that different groups of people just have different cultures. Indeed, Boas, being the first to speak about 'cultures', transformed the culture concept from a singular into a plural one (Liron, 2003, pp. 29-30). The claim for universality and perfection inherent in the singular culture concept as discussed in regard to Humboldt was dropped by

developing the pluralistic and relativistic notion of cultures.⁵

Second, the emphasis on 'habits' in Boas' quote should be noted. Although language is still an important topic in cultural anthropology, the emphasis on 'habit' indicates that culture is comprised of more than language: it consists in customs, routines, ceremonies, etc., that is, social practices (Rosenblatt, 2004; Ortner, 1984). While for Humboldt culture rather exclusively refers to the spiritual or intellectual powers of human beings, the definition of culture in terms of habits includes both the intellectual powers as well as the powers of the human body.

Remarkably, however, this plural culture concept can be traced back to Humboldt's notion of national character. When Boas emigrated from Germany to the USA at the end of the 19th century, he took the idea of national character and developed his notion of culture from it (Bunzl, 1996). From this perspective, the emphasis on habits in the anthropological culture concept is understandable, because Humboldt's concept of character emphasizes the habits of the human body.

Anglo-Saxon anthropology does not describe different cultures in terms of 'character'. Instead, following Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), a student of Boas, today the notion of cultural 'patterns' is well established. Cultures are viewed as patterns of certain human behaviors, material techniques, social institutions etc. selected out of a 'great arc of potential human purposes and motivations' (Benedict, 2005, p. 237). No culture can be perfect, because 'the great arc along which all the possible human behaviours are distributed is far too immense and too full of contradictions for any one culture to utilize even any considerable portion of it' (ibid.). In conclusion, cultures have their particular worldviews, just as, according to Humboldt, national characters and languages do.

This shift from the singular to the plural culture concept poses questions concerning the relation between culture and *Bildung*. *Bildung* is still used as a singular concept, and in most writings it still refers exclusively to the intellectual sphere. Contemporary empirical research based on quantitative analysis even sets out standards of intellectual achievements in the name of *Bildung* (in Germany, international studies like PISA are called 'research on *Bildung*' [*Bildungsforschung*]). This means that while the anthropological culture concept stresses the relative value of different cultures, the concept of *Bildung*—especially as it is used in quantitative research—tends to minimize cultural differences through the normative act of setting global educational standards. Is it still legitimate to conceptualize *Bildung* in terms of a 'higher' development of achievements that are seen as universal? In fact, the globalization of Western knowledge not only has positive outcomes; it tends to repress traditional local knowledge (cp. Merriam, 2007).

This paper cannot go into all the details of this complex problem. Therefore, in the remainder of the paper the concept of cultural translation in Anglo-Saxon anthropology shall be discussed and linked to the idea of *Bildung*. It will be suggested that the concept of *Bildung* needs to be modified and enlarged in light of the considerations on cultural translation.

CULTURAL TRANSLATION

As already noted above, the term 'translation' refers to the transposition of one language into another, for example from Japanese into German. In Anglo-Saxon anthropology, the concept of 'cultural translation' has been developed. As this term suggests, cultural translation is not just about transposing language, but rather of transposing one culture into another. How is this to be understood? This question will be elaborated upon with reference to some basic methodological and epistemological considerations in Anglo-Saxon anthropology.

Anglo-Saxon anthropology gains knowledge of other cultures through ethnographic fieldwork. Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) describes the purpose of fieldwork as encountering another culture in a most open way. He says that anthropologists need to be free 'of the biased and pre-judged opinions inevitable in the average practical man' in order to find 'the objective, scientific view of things' (Malinowski, 1984, pp. 5-6). Malinowski describes how he took part in the daily life of a native village on the South Sea Islands and argues that such direct participation is crucial for a correct understanding of another society.

The task of anthropologists is not only to observe and to understand the culture of the foreign society, but also to write an account that is intelligible to people who have never been to this foreign society. This kind of writing is what is meant by cultural translation. The specific characteristic of cultural translation is that it does not refer, for the most part, to a given textual piece, but to habits and social practices, as implied in the above given definition of culture in Anglo-Saxon anthropology. Translation, here, is more than a cognitive exercise. Talal Asad claims that 'the anthropologist's translation is not merely a matter of matching sentences in the abstract, but of learning to live another form of life' (Asad, 1986, p. 149, italics in original). The researcher needs to participate in the other culture's practices with his or her flesh and bones in order to find out what this culture is about. Therefore, the anthropologist not only gains cognitive, but also bodily understanding of the foreign culture. Correspondingly, Malinowski writes about his life on the South Sea Islands: 'I had to learn how to behave, and to a certain extent, I acquired "the feeling" for native good and bad manners' (Malinowski, 1984, p. 8).

Seen from today's point of view, Malinowski was unmistakably right to state that an understanding of others rests upon an open mind and that a direct encounter with other people is most important in this regard. Here we find openness to others, the prerequisite for processes of *Bildung*, as outlined above in reference to Humboldt.

However, the idea that it might be possible for a researcher to get rid of 'biased and pre-judged opinions' and to gain 'objective' knowledge of another culture needs to be criticized. In order to consider this point it is important to bear in mind that all human beings are shaped by their cultural environment in an encompassing way. By way of education and socialization human beings are subjected to 'cultural conditioning' (Benedict, 2008). Not only is the visible behavior of humans culturally formed; so too are human ways of perceiving the world, ways of thinking, and ways of evaluating events. In this sense, a human's view of the world is always culturally 'biased and pre-judged'; humans cannot but look at the world through culturally-molded eyes. As a consequence, anthropologists observe other peoples according to their own culturally conditioned perceptions and then create accounts according to the standards of their own culture. Today, anthropologists see their accounts as interpretations rather than as objective representations (Geertz, 2000). The anthropologist, through cultural translation, becomes the interpreter of the foreign culture that he studies.

In order to fully understand the difficulties of cultural translation I suggest considering the notion of social practices in regard to how children grow up. We can say that all children all around the world need to learn certain things; for instance, everyone learns to walk or to eat without the help of others. In a sense, one could say that such skills are 'natural', or 'universal'. But we can also say that such 'natural' capacities are acquired in culturally particular forms: there are considerable differences between cultures in regard to walking (the pace and posture of walking, the social relations that are expressed in walking formations, etc.), or eating (what and how people eat, the values attached to

eating, etc.). From early childhood on, human beings learn what kind of behavior is 'good' and 'bad'. We develop a corresponding 'habitus', i.e. structured schemes of behavior, perception, and appreciation that are deeply inscribed into our bodies and 'highly charged with affectivity' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 167). Moreover, we are usually not aware of these schemes. Features of our acting and thinking that are in fact 'cultural' easily appear to us as if they were 'natural'. This means that we realize only to some degree the extent to which our behavior, feeling, and thinking are conditioned by culture.

Let me give a simple but consequential example for cultural translation. When I did interview research in Japan I encountered a problem in trying to translate the Japanese word *oniisan* ('older brother'), which was used by the interviewee, into German. In German, we have the word 'brother' (*Bruder*), but no specific expressions like 'older' or 'younger' brother as in Japanese. In German it would be quite strange to read the term *älterer Bruder* (older brother) in a text. However, the Japanese original text emphasizes that the brother who is addressed is the older one. In regard to cultural translation, the problem outlined here is that behind the Japanese word *oniisan* and the German word *Bruder* there are rather different conceptions of family life. While Germans tend to stress equality between siblings in daily life, Japanese tend to stress status differences in correspondence with the siblings' ages. The word *oniisan* and the word *Bruder* indeed express different worldviews. These worldviews are not only to be found at the cognitive level, but first and foremost at the level of embodied habits in daily life. Therefore, if a German really wants to understand what *oniisan* means, it is not enough to study the Japanese language; most of all, she or he needs to learn the Japanese way of family life. The same holds true, of course, for Japanese who want to understand the German word *Bruder*.

Cultural translation, i.e. learning to live another form of life, challenges the cultural conditioning of the learner, for her or his common ways of doing things and evaluating events will be turned upside down.⁶ Cultural translation is an attempt to understand others that includes not only a cognitive, but also a bodily, emotional, and moral challenge.

CULTURAL TRANSLATION AND BILDUNG

Finally, the preceding considerations on *Bildung* and cultural translation will now be related to each other. *Bildung*, it will be recalled, comprises of a transformation of a subject's relations towards (1) the world and (2) the self. In Humboldt's writings, this transformation is mainly conceptualized in regard to cognitive learning, namely the learning of other languages. In the following it will be suggested that cultural translation is a form of *Bildung*. However, the move from learning another language in Humboldt's sense to learning another cultural pattern suggests a reformulation and broadening of the concept of *Bildung* through the inclusion of learning with the body. Let me consider this in regard to the two outlined dimensions of the transformational process that *Bildung* is.

(1) Anthropologists should (ideally) learn the language of the foreign society they study. In doing so, they get to know what Humboldt calls the 'worldview' of this society that the language expresses. What has been said above about *Bildung* in regard to learning another language thus applies in the case of anthropological fieldwork. However, cultural translation comprises of more than just cognitive understanding. In learning another way of living the subject acquires not only new ways of thinking, but also of acting, feeling, and making moral judgments. Therefore, the anthropologist gets to know a new point of view in two senses, a metaphoric as well as a concrete one. In this regard it seems

appropriate to enlarge the concept of *Bildung* by including considerations on social practices and bodily learning (Kellermann and Mattig, 2011; Wulf *et. al.*, 2004). Seen from this perspective, processes of *Bildung* involve, at least to some extent, the transformation of a subject's habitus (cp. Rosenberg, 2011). As said above, human beings cannot escape their 'biased and pre-judged opinions'; nevertheless, cultural translation promises to enlarge a subject's views of other cultural worlds in a rather comprehensive way.

(2) Anthropological research not only aims to understand the lives of other people. But also it is thought that by understanding others, researchers may develop a deeper understanding of their own culture. Malinowski puts it as follows: 'Perhaps through realizing human nature in a shape very distant and foreign to us, we shall have some light shed on our own' (Malinowski, 1984, p. 25). Cultural translation has the potential to make people aware of their own cultural conditioning for they may come to realize that things can indeed be done differently; that events can be evaluated differently; that thoughts can be thought differently. Through cultural translation people may come to understand that many characteristics of themselves that they so far held to be 'natural' are in fact 'cultural'. Struggling through the initially disturbing experience of cultural translation promises to lead to a process of *Bildung*, i.e., to taking a new point of view upon the self. Again, 'taking a new point of view' is meant here in a comprehensive way, including cognitive as well as emotional, moral, and bodily understanding.

An example from anthropological literature may serve to make this point clear. In 1946, Ruth Benedict published her classic book on Japanese culture, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Benedict, 2006). She was assigned to conduct this study by the United States government during World War II, because America experienced the Japanese as an often terrifyingly incomprehensible enemy. The Japanese did not behave in the way to which the Americans were accustomed. In other words, the Japanese had a different habitus than the Americans. The book is an attempt to understand the Japanese habitus from an American perspective.

In 1971, the Japanese psychologist Doi Takeo published the book *Amae No Kozo* (trans. *The Anatomy of Dependence*). In the first chapter Doi describes his own experiences of coming to the USA in 1950 to live and study there. To him, the habits of Americans in daily life were very odd; he felt confused and lonely and realized that there was a 'difference between my ways of thinking and feeling and those of my hosts' (Doi, 2001, p. 11). At that time he came to read Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. He recounts the experience of reading this book as follows

I still remember the vivid impression I had of seeing myself reflected in it. Time and again, as I turned the pages, I gave a nod of surprised...the book stirred my intellectual curiosity as to why the Japanese and the Americans should be so different (p. 13).

I had come to realize that something had changed in myself as a result of the 'cultural shock' I suffered when I first went to America. I came back to Japan with a new sensibility, and from then on the chief characteristic of the Japanese in my eyes was something that...could best be expressed by the word *amae* (p. 17).

This example demonstrates the transformational process of *Bildung* that subjects undergo in cultural translation. At first, there might be a 'cultural shock', as Doi says: everything a subject held to be 'normal' or 'natural' can be turned upside down through cultural encounter. In Benedict's case,

the analysis of Japanese culture leads to a new understanding of another culture. This is what has been outlined as the first characteristic movement of *Bildung*. In Doi's case, the encounter with the American culture leads to a new understanding of his own cultural background. This is the second characteristic movement of *Bildung*.

With these considerations in mind, what is a 'higher' development of human capacities? I suggest that *Bildung* can be seen as a higher development when a subject gains a better understanding of other cultures and its own culture. This process of understanding is hermeneutic in nature and can thus never come to an end.

OUTLOOK

In today's globalizing world the experience of cultural differences is no longer reserved for anthropologists who go to remote societies. Rather, cultural diversity is more and more to be found within societies. In this situation, cultural translation is an ability that is needed not only by anthropologists but also by the population in general: everyone should be able, at least to some extent, to understand other cultures. In reference to Malinowski's above given quote, 'the average practical man' needs to get at least basic competence in cultural translation in order to enlarge his 'biased and pre-judged opinions'. Only by going through the above outlined process of *Bildung* will we be able to cope with the cultural tensions that emerge in modern societies.

At the same time, globalization not only leads to growing cultural diversity but also to cultural homogeneity. Standish critically reflects upon the use of English as the common language of international academic conferences. Such a use, he argues, risks leaving out the experience of the 'abyss' that opens up in processes of translation (Standish, 2011). Seen from the perspective of cultural translation one can go one step further and criticize the global hegemonic use of typically Western knowledge practices like conferences, symposia, etc. Why not use different cultural practices, like, say, Tibetan debate (Lempert, 2005)? What an abyssal experience that would be!

Nevertheless, although there is a global standardization of academic practices, there still seem to be hidden cultural differences. In a study of meetings of German and Japanese scholars, Mechthild Duppel-Takayama suggests that although on a superficial level Germans and Japanese seem to understand each other, on a deeper level this is not the case. She therefore calls such academic meetings 'rites of misunderstanding' (Duppel-Takayama, 2006). My own experience in the field of educational philosophy is that European educationalists implicitly associate education with notions of autonomy, emancipation, and equality. While for European scholars this association usually is rather 'natural' (although they know that it is a historical product), it seems that the link between education, emancipation, equality, and autonomy is not as self-evident for Japanese educationalists. In fact, in my classes at Kyoto University I learned that principles like autonomy are not as highly valued in Japan as they are in Western cultures, both on a theoretical as well as on a practical level. The above reference to the problem of translating such a simple word as *oniisan* into German suggests that there are big differences in regard to how children grow up in Japan and Germany (this is to give but one example). To me it seems that visiting European scholars in Japan and Japanese visiting scholars in Europe may not be aware enough of this cultural gap. Of course, this statement would need to be qualified by empirical research. These anecdotal observations suggest, however, that international scholars would do well to acquire greater competency in cultural translation in order to better understand scholars from other cultures.

The transformational process of cultural translation may to a certain extent lead us to realize how much we are subjected to the worldview and the patterns of the culture in which we grew up; through cultural translation we may realize what a tiny part out of the ‘great arch’ of possibilities of thought, expression, experience etc. our own culture selects. Boas hoped that through learning from other cultures we might be enabled to break ‘the shackles that tradition has laid upon us’ (Boas, 1974, p. 42). By realizing that we are subjected to arbitrary tradition we can also distance ourselves from this tradition. It is here that the concept of *Bildung* truly applies, for we may discover new and hopefully liberating ways of looking at ourselves, as well as new social practices, through cultural translation.

NOTES

1. In this paper, the term ‘Anglo-Saxon anthropology’ refers to British social anthropology and American cultural anthropology. Although there are certainly differences between both these traditions, in this paper their commonalities shall be stressed.
2. In Anglo-Saxon anthropology many different definitions of culture have been suggested and, in turn, contested. However, the notion of the word ‘culture’ as it is used in Anglo-Saxon anthropology is clearly different from Humboldt’s notion of *Cultur*. Further reflections upon the Anglo-Saxon culture concept can be found in Lavenda and Schultz (2007) and Winthrop (1991).
3. In fact, how disturbing life in a remote society can be is demonstrated in Malinowski’s fieldwork diary (Malinowski, 1967).

REFERENCES

- Asad, T. (1986) The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology, in: J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (eds.) *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press).
- Benedict, R. (2005) *Patterns of Culture* (Boston and New York, Mariner).
- Benedict, R. (2006) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston and New York, Mariner).
- Benedict, R. (2008) Continuities and Discontinuities in Cultural Conditioning, in: R. A. LeVine and R. S. New (eds.) *Anthropology and Child Development. A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Malden, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell Publishing).
- Benner, D. (2003) *Wilhelm von Humboldts Bildungstheorie. Eine problemgeschichtliche Studie zum Begründungszusammenhang neuzeitlicher Bildungsreform* (Weinheim and München, Juventa).
- Boas, F. (1974) The Background of My Early Thinking, in: G. F. Stocking (ed.) *The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911. A Franz Boas Reader* (New York, Basic Books).
- Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*, R. Nice, trans. (Padstow and Cornwall, Polity Press).
- Brameld, Th. (1957) *Cultural Foundations of Education. An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (New York, Harper and Brothers).
- Bunzl, M. (1996) Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition: From Volksgeist and Nationalcharakter to an Anthropological Concept of Culture, in: G. Stocking (ed.) *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic. Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition* (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press).
- Doi, T. (2001) *The Anatomy of Dependence* J. Bester, trans. (Tokyo, New York and London, Kodansha).
- Duppel-Takayama, M. (2006) Ritualisiertes Nicht-Verstehen. Wissenschaftsstil und Textmuster in Japan und Deutschland, in: Japanische Gesellschaft für Germanistik (ed.) *Rituale des Verstehens—Verstehen der Rituale* (München, Iudicium).
- Eirmbter-Stolbrink, E. (2005) *Wilhelm von Humboldt—interkulturell gelesen* (Nordhausen, Bautz).
- Flitner, A. (1985) Aufklärer gegen elitären Dünkel. Die Idee, Volkskultur und Gelehrsamkeit zusammenzuführen,

- DIE ZEIT*, April 5th, p. 53.
- Geertz, C. (2000) Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture, in: C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, Basic Books).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1849) *Letters of William von Humboldt to a Female Friend. A Complete Edition, Vol. 2*, Catharine M. A. Couper, trans. (London, John Chapman).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1854) *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, Coseph Coulthard, trans. (London, John Chapman).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1905) Über den Nationalcharakter der Sprachen, in: A. Leitzmann (ed.) *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke, vol.4* (Berlin, Behr's Verlag).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1908) Ueber den Charakter der Griechen, die idealische und historische Ansicht desselben, in: A. Leitzmann (ed.) *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke, vol. 7.2* (Berlin, Behr's Verlag).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1960) Plan einer vergleichenden Anthropologie, in: A. Flitner and K. Giel (eds.) *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke in fünf Bänden, Vol.1* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- Humboldt, W. v. (1961) Die Vasken, oder Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch Biscaya and das französische Basquenland im Frühling des Jahrs 1801, in: A. Flitner and K. Giel (eds.) *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke in fünf Bänden, Vol.2* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- Kellermann, I. and Mattig, R. (2011) Schule, Körper und Bildung: Eine ethnographische Perspektive auf die Schulanfangsphase, in: A. Kraus (ed.) *Körperlichkeit in der Schule—Aktuelle Körperdiskurse und ihre Empirie. Band IV: Heterogene Lernausgangslagen* (Oberhausen, Athena Verlag).
- Lavenda, R. H. and Schultz, E. A. (2007) *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Boston, McGraw Hill).
- Lempert, M. P. (2005) Denotational Textuality and Demeanor Indexicality in Tibetan Buddhist Debate, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, Vol. 15 (2) pp. 171-193.
- Liron, T. (2003) Franz Boas and the Discovery of Culture (available at: <http://home.uchicago.edu/~tliron/boas/boas.pdf>).
- Malinowski, B. (1967) *A diary in the strict sense of the term* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Malinowski, B. (1984) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Illinois, Waveland Press).
- Marotzki, W. (1990) *Entwurf einer strukturalen Bildungstheorie. Biographietheoretische Auslegung von Bildungsprozessen in hochkomplexen Gesellschaften* (Weinheim, Deutscher Studien Verlag).
- Menze, C. (1976) Die Individualität als Ausgangs- und Endpunkt des Humboldtschen Denkens, in: K. Hammacher (ed.) *Universalismus und Wissenschaft im Werk und Wirken der Brüder Humboldt* (Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann).
- Merriam, S. B. (2007) *Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing* (Malabar, Krieger).
- Ortner, S. (1984) 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1) pp. 126-166.
- Rosenberg, F. (2011) *Bildung und Habitustransformation. Empirische Rekonstruktionen und Bildungstheoretische Reflexionen* (Bielefeld, transcript).
- Rosenblatt, D. (2004) An Anthropology Made Safe for Culture: Patterns of Practice and the Politics of Difference in Ruth Benedict, *American Anthropologist* 106 (3) pp. 459-472.
- Schäfer, G. and Wulf, Chr. (1999) *Bild-Bilder-Bildung* (Weinheim, Beltz).
- Standish, P. (2011) One Language, One World: The Common Measure of Education, in: *Finding Meaning, Cultures across Borders. Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium between the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Japan) and the Institute of Education, University of London (UK)* (Kyoto, Kyoto University), pp.17-25.
- Standish, P. (2012) Social Justice and the Occident, in: *Culture and Subjectivity in Translation. Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium between the Graduate School of Education, Kyoto University (Japan), and the Institute of Education, University of London (UK)* (Kyoto, Kyoto University), pp. 17-27.
- Trabant, J. (1990) *Traditionen Humboldts* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp).
- Winthrop, R. H. (1991) *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (New York, Westport and London, Greenwood Press).

- Wulf, Chr., Althans, B., Audehm, K., Bausch, C., Jörissen, B., Göhlich, M., Mattig, R., Tervooren, A., Wagner-Willi, M. and Zirfas, J. (2004) *Bildung im Ritual. Schule, Familie, Jugend, Medien* (Opladen, VS Verlag).
- Wulf, Chr. (2003) Perfecting the Individual: Wilhelm von Humboldt's concept of anthropology, Bildung and mimesis, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35 (2), pp. 241-249.
- Wulf, Chr. (2006) *Anthropologie kultureller Vielfalt. Interkulturelle Bildung in Zeiten der Globalisierung* (Bielefeld, transcript).
- Wulf, Chr., Althans, B., Audehm, K., Blaschke, G., Ferrin, N., Kellermann, I., Mattig, R. and Schinkel, S. (2011) *Die Geste in Erziehung, Bildung und Sozialisation. Ethnographische Feldstudien* (Wiesbaden, VS Verlag).